

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Original) Apparatus for use in a vermiculture plant, the apparatus including a treatment receptacle having a treatment chamber therein and a base upon which material within the treatment chamber is disposed, the receptacle being arranged so that when in use there is a space below the base, a harvester operable to extract material from the treatment chamber through the base and a collecting assembly including a flexible belt operatively connected to a rotatable drum so that it can be wound onto or drawn from the rotatable member, said belt being arranged so that it can adopt a collecting position when at least partially unwound from the rotatable member wherein it is positioned below the treatment chamber and harvester so that harvested material can be collected upon it, said belt being operable so that when the belt is wound onto the rotatable member material thereon can be transferred to a discharge zone.

2. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said rotatable member is a rotatable drum arranged so that the belt can be wound around the drum and retracted from underneath the treatment chamber.

3. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 2 wherein the discharge zone is disposed adjacent the drum so that as the belt is wound onto the drum material is discharged from the belt.

4. (Currently amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, ~~2 or 3~~ wherein said collecting assembly further includes a support tray upon which the belt rests when in the collecting position.

5. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 4 wherein said support tray includes side walls between which the belt is disposed.

6. (Currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1 wherein said belt is porous.

7. (Currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1 wherein the harvester includes a main frame operatively mounted for movement relative to the main body of the treatment apparatus in a position below the base thereof, the harvester further including tool carried by the frame for extracting material from the treatment chamber.

8. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 7 wherein the harvester body is suspended from rails disposed adjacent the base of the treatment apparatus or supported on rails spaced from the main body of the treatment apparatus, and includes drive means for causing movement of the main frame along the rails.

9. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 8 wherein the belt is retractable generally in the same direction of movement of the harvester.

10. (Currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1 further including a feed system, the feed system including a material distributor assembly for distributing the material into the treatment chamber, the distributor assembly including a distributor conveyor which is adapted to be wound onto or from a rotatable member, the assembly further including a carriage which is adapted to traverse over the top of the treatment chamber, the carriage including an idler roller thereon over which the distributor conveyor passes with its free end being anchored to a fixed structure.

11. (Currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~any preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein there is provided a plurality of said treatment receptacles disposed one above the other in a tiered configuration.

12. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 11 wherein each said treatment receptacle has associated therewith one said harvester and one said collecting assembly.

13. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 11 wherein said harvester is adapted to be moved into a harvesting position for each treatment receptacle and said flexible belt of said collecting assembly is adapted to be positioned for use with each treatment receptacle.

14. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 13 further including a lifting mechanism for transferring said harvester and said flexible belt of said collecting assembly between said treatment receptacles.

15. (Currently amended) Apparatus according to claim 13 ~~or~~ 14 wherein a single said rotatable member can be used for moving said harvester and said flexible belt of said collecting assembly.